United Nations A/58/359

General Assembly

Distr.: General
11 September 2003

Original: English

Fifty-eighth session
Item 51 of the provisional agenda*
Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/270 B, provides a framework for enhanced coherence among the various implementation and follow-up processes. The present report is focused on identifying the core elements of the framework that are essential for integrating these follow-up processes and for ensuring a sharper focus on implementation. The report also highlights those aspects of the resolution that require special attention during the fifty-eighth session of the Assembly, particularly the provisions regarding intergovernmental bodies. A number of recommendations are made to the Assembly for advancing the implementation of the resolution.

* A/58/150.

** The submission of the present report was delayed in order to reflect the outcome of the substantive session of 2003 of the Economic and Social Council.

03-49818 (E) 101003

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Background	1–3	3
II.	Introduction	4–8	3
III.	A structure for integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up (General Assembly resolution 57/270 B)	9	5
IV.	Implementation of General Assembly resolution 57/270 B	10–26	6
	A. Strengthening the ongoing activities for implementing the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits	11–15	6
	B. Measures to enhance the role of the United Nations system, particularly the intergovernmental bodies	16–20	7
	C. Review of the implementation	21–26	10
V.	Recommendations	27–30	11

I. Background

1. In its resolution 57/270 A, the General Assembly decided to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-eighth session an item entitled "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields" and to consider it directly in plenary meeting. In the same resolution, the Assembly decided to establish an open-ended ad hoc working group, under the chairmanship of the President of the Assembly, to produce concrete recommendations to ensure an integrated and coordinated follow-up. The working group submitted its report to the Assembly, recommending the adoption of a draft resolution, which was adopted as resolution 57/270 B at the 91st plenary meeting of the Assembly held on 23 June 2003.

2. In paragraph 39 of its resolution 57/270 B, the Assembly also decided to consider under this item (a) the assessment of the implementation of the outcomes of the conferences and summits, and its impact on the achievement of the goals and targets of the conferences and summits, and to provide the necessary guidance for the further implementation of and follow-up to these outcomes and (b) the chapters of the annual report of the Economic and Social Council relevant to this item, including through the participation in its discussions of the President of the Council. The General Assembly invited the Secretary-General to submit a report on this agenda item.

3. The present report is submitted in response to the aforementioned request. Considering that the resolution was adopted recently, this report is focused on (a) highlighting the core elements of the framework provided by the resolution that would serve to bring together the various activities concerned with the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits; and (b) identifying issues that require immediate attention during the current session of the General Assembly.

II. Introduction

4. By generating a global consensus on the issues of poverty eradication and sustainable development as central concerns of national and international policy frameworks, the summits and conferences of the last decade succeeded in giving renewed relevance to the work of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, and to its mission to guide and harmonize policies for development. The conferences and summits were also successful in engaging civil society, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders on an unprecedented scale. They thus marked the first crucial phase in the process of bringing development issues to the forefront of the multilateral agenda.

5. In order to build on these achievements, distinct programmes and activities were launched and, in some instances, special organizations and intergovernmental bodies were established to follow up and review the outcomes of the conferences. Organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, Member States and other stakeholders launched a number of initiatives to advance this global consensus on development. In 1995, the Economic and Social Council initiated work on an integrated approach to conference follow-up by focusing on the common themes of

the conferences, as a means to enhance the impact of the follow-up activities and to optimize results.

6. By creating a new platform for convergence on principles, objectives and coordinated action, and by turning global consensus into specific goals and time-bound targets, backed by political commitment at the highest level, the Millennium Summit marked a major new turning point in this process. While the Millennium Development Goals do not encompass all conference goals and commitments, together with the United Nations Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2), they provide the United Nations system, Governments and other relevant stakeholders with a basic common framework for promoting mutually reinforcing actions. A distinct process exists to monitor progress towards the achievement of the development goals contained in the Millennium Declaration. They are reviewed by the General Assembly, as part of its deliberations on the annual reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Declaration (see A/56/326, A/57/270 and A/58/323). At the country level, the United Nations Development Group is closely monitoring progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

7. The holding of two major conferences in 2002 — the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico (March 2002), and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa (September 2002) — marked yet another phase in this process. The outcomes of both conferences had a major focus on the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. The conferences reinforced the widely shared need to ensure a sharper focus on implementation, to move from principles and commitments to action, and for the intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations to commit themselves to working in a coherent and coordinated way to support conference implementation. The need was recognized for a close link between policy development at the intergovernmental level and operational work undertaken at the country level by the funds, programmes, and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and other relevant organizations, and for the active involvement of relevant stakeholders in the implementation process.

8. Responding to a growing and widely recognized need to bring together these follow-up processes through a comprehensive framework for effective implementation of the agreed vision of development, General Assembly resolution 57/270 B could not have been adopted at a more opportune time. By building on General Assembly resolutions 50/227, 48/162, 45/264 and agreed conclusions 1995/1 and 2002/2 of the Economic and Social Council, the resolution provides a framework for bringing architectural coherence to the various implementation processes while maintaining the distinct identity of the follow-up processes to each of the outcomes. The resolution provides tools to better coordinate global, regional and national development activities and to link together these processes in order to optimize mutual reinforcement in the pursuit of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.

III. A structure for integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up (General Assembly resolution 57/270 B)

9. The following five elements of General Assembly resolution 57/270 B constitute the core components of the framework for integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up:

(a) **Enabling environment at national and international levels**. The role of national policies and development strategies is crucial for achieving the agreed goals of development. At the same time, national development efforts need to be supported by an enabling international economic environment. The achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, requires an enhanced partnership between donor and recipient countries, based on the recognition of national leadership and ownership of development plans, as well as sound polices and good governance at the national and international levels;

(b) **Means of implementation**. The means of implementation identified in the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits, including the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation)[1] and the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development,[2] are crucial for achieving the agreed development goals. Emphasis was placed on the importance of institutional frameworks, as identified in the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits;

(c) **Role of the United Nations system**. The United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO), has an important responsibility to assist Governments in staying fully engaged in the implementation of and follow-up to agreements and commitments reached at the major United Nations conferences and summits. This role can be most effectively promoted by ensuring that intergovernmental bodies, such as the General Assembly and its Second and Third Committees, the Economic and Social Council, the governing bodies of the funds and programmes, and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), place strong emphasis on implementation and on strengthening links between policy work and operational activities;

(d) **Role of other relevant stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector**. The enhanced engagement of other relevant stakeholders is becoming increasingly important for achieving tangible results and concrete impact. Their engagement can be enhanced either through partnerships to pursue specific goals or by encouraging them to incorporate the agreed goals in their activities. Both types of initiatives need to be encouraged;

(e) **Reviewing implementation**. The review and appraisal processes of the major United Nations conferences and summits should be geared to assessing, in a cogent way, progress being made in the implementation of commitments, as well as to identifying specific actions and initiatives to overcome constraints and measures to expedite implementation. The periodicity and format of such reviews should be decided by the General Assembly on a case-by-case basis, bearing in mind relevant specific provisions, the nature of the issues involved, economic and political circumstances and developments, and the desirability of continuing to use existing

structures. The importance of these processes complementing each other should also be borne in mind as, should the need to continue to mobilize political will and public opinion, and to engage civil society and the private sector, not only in the implementation of individual conferences, but also in taking stock of overall progress in advancing the development agenda that these conferences and the Millennium Declaration have served to shape. It is notable that the General Assembly, in its resolution 57/270 B, recognized that there is scope for a major event in 2005, possibly a comprehensive review, which could be politically attractive and powerful.

IV. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 57/270 B

10. A distinction can be drawn among three kinds of implementation actions. First, there are ongoing activities that need to be strengthened or more sharply focused on integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the conferences at the national, regional and international levels; second, there are decisions to be adopted at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly to implement specific provisions of the resolution, particularly regarding the organization of the work of the Assembly itself and other intergovernmental bodies. Third, there is the question of future reviews.

A. Strengthening the ongoing activities for implementing the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits

11. As noted above, a whole range of activities and programmes were initiated by the funds and programmes and other relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations to pursue the outcomes of the conferences and summits. In resolution 57/270 B, the General Assembly has particularly emphasized that a stronger link should be established between policy guidance and operational activities. The respective governing bodies will have an important role to play in ensuring that relevant policy decisions are integrated into the programme of work of the funds and programmes, as will the Economic and Social Council in the exercise of its oversight responsibilities vis-à-vis these entities.

12. The Assembly has underlined the need to ensure that the inter-agency guidelines for operational activities for development of the United Nations system, and the work of CEB and the United Nations Development Group, should reflect the agreements and commitments reached at the major United Nations conferences and summits. The Assembly has also stressed that system-wide inter-agency coordination and cooperation to implement the agreements and commitments reached at conferences and summits should be further promoted by utilizing CEB. Ongoing inter-agency activities in these areas have been reported to the ad hoc working group and to the Economic and Social Council. As a follow-up to the resolution, these activities will be further reinforced and reported to the Assembly in the context of the annual reports of CEB, as well as in the Secretary-General's annual reporting under this agenda item.

13. The regional commissions have been requested, within their existing mandates, to further strengthen and enhance the effectiveness of their activities and improve their coordination with the entire United Nations system with regard to the implementation and review of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, in order to ensure the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. Follow-up actions at both the intergovernmental and Secretariat levels will be similarly covered in the Secretary-General's reports to the Assembly on this agenda item.

14. The Bretton Woods institutions and WTO have been encouraged to continue their efforts to ensure the effective implementation of commitments reached in the Monterrey Consensus with the aim of achieving the internationally agreed development goals. There is also a call for greater coherence, coordination and cooperation among the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO. The annual spring meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, WTO and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is an important instrument for monitoring progress by the United Nations system in implementing and achieving greater coherence, coordination and cooperation among these institutions. The high-level dialogue to be held during the current session of the General Assembly will provide a further opportunity to make progress in this regard.

15. These key provisions and other related decisions serve to strengthen implementation at all levels and are to be implemented by Governments, organizations and relevant stakeholders.

B. Measures to enhance the role of the United Nations system, particularly the intergovernmental bodies

16. A number of recommendations and decisions in resolution 57/270 B regarding the various intergovernmental bodies require action or need to be pursued during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

1. General Assembly

17. The following action by the General Assembly is required:

(a) The General Assembly should assess, during its fifty-eighth session, the functioning of the follow-up mechanisms established in accordance with chapter III of the Monterrey Consensus (see General Assembly resolution 57/270 B, para. 27 (d));

(b) The Second Committee should consider the indicative programme of work set out in the annex to resolution 57/270B and take a decision thereon by December 2003 (see General Assembly resolution 57/270 B, para. 62).

18. In addition, the following provisions of the resolution will need to be pursued during the session:

(a) There should be greater consultation between the presidents and the bureaux of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to improve coordination between the Assembly and the Council (see General Assembly

resolution 57/270 B, para. 38). In the past, the presidents of the General Assembly and the Council have met in order to promote coordination in the work of the two bodies. Considering the need for enhanced coordination, these contacts may be institutionalized and the agenda should include the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. Meetings between the two bureaux could also become a regular feature of these institutionalized consultations;

(b) Under item 51 of the provisional agenda of the fifty-eighth session, consideration should be given to the chapters of the annual report of the Economic and Social Council relevant to the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including through the participation in its discussions of the President of the Council (see General Assembly resolution 57/270 B, para. 39). To fulfil this mandate, arrangements will need to be made for the President of the Council to participate in the deliberations of the fifty-eighth session of the Assembly on this agenda item;

(c) The General Committee of the General Assembly should ensure better coordination between the agendas of the Second and Third Committees; the bureaux of the two Committees should review their respective programmes of work in order to exchange information on the issues discussed in each, identify potential areas of overlap or duplication and examine means of considering, in a more coordinated manner, issues related to the follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits and make recommendations thereon to their respective Committees. Consideration should be given to the use of joint informal debate that can inform the work of each Committee; better use could be made of the General Assembly plenary debate for issues that are considered by both Committees (see General Assembly resolution 57/270 B, paras. 60 and 61). In order to comply with this recommendation, necessary preparations have already been made for holding a meeting of the two bureaux at the start of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. The bureaux will examine the various issues raised in resolution 50/270 B and will report the results of the consultations to their respective committees;

(d) The General Assembly encouraged the United Nations system to continue to improve its reports and to make them more analytical and action-oriented. It referred to the processes launched by its resolution 57/300 (see General Assembly resolution 57/270 B, paras. 64 and 65). That resolution notably contains provisions for consolidating reports (see para. 20). In the context of the relevant provisions of Assembly resolution 57/300, the Secretary-General has already consolidated a number of reports and will continue to do so;

(e) The General Assembly has recommended that debates in the plenary meetings and in the Second and Third Committees be more interactive, and encouraged the participation of relevant stakeholders in accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. The bureaux may consider making use of round tables, briefings and panels to inform the intergovernmental deliberations (see General Assembly resolution 57/270 B, para. 67). The relevant bureaux are already taking steps to make the deliberations more interactive and will keep the Committees informed in accordance with this recommendation.

2. Economic and Social Council

19. The following action is required by the Economic and Social Council:

(a) The Council should include the representatives of the Trade and Development Board in the high-level meeting of the Council with the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO (see General Assembly resolution 57/270 B, para. 27 (c)). In its resolution 2003/47, the Council has already invited the representatives of the Trade and Development Board to participate in the high-level meeting in 2004;

(b) The Council should review by means of a cross-sectoral approach the progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits and their follow-up processes, and assess its impact on the achievement of the goals and targets of the conferences and summits; this review and assessment should be carried out on an annual basis, focusing on a particular common cross-sectoral thematic issue, at the coordination segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council (see General Assembly resolution 57/270 B, para. 41). In this regard, the Council has been requested to establish, not later than 2004, a multi-year work programme for the coordination segment of its substantive session, based on a focused and balanced list of cross-sectoral thematic issues common to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the objectives, goals and targets of the Millennium Declaration (see General Assembly resolution 57/270 B, para. 42). By its resolution 2003/6, the Council expressed its determination to finalize the list of cross-sectoral thematic issues and the multi-year work programme for its coordination segment. To this end, the Council invited its Bureau to initiate informal consultations by January 2004, with the aim of reaching a decision before the start of its substantive session of 2004.

3. Functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council

20. Each functional commission has been requested to examine its methods of work in order to better pursue the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, recognizing that there is no need for a uniform approach since each functional commission has its own specificity, while also noting that modern methods of work can better guarantee the review of progress made in implementation at all levels, on the basis of a report with recommendations to be submitted by the Secretary-General to each functional commission and relevant subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council on their methods of work, in accordance with the provisions defined by the respective outcomes and relevant decisions taken by each body, bearing in mind the progress recently achieved in this regard by certain commissions, especially the Commission on Sustainable Development; the functional commissions and other relevant bodies of the Economic and Social Council should report to the Council no later than 2005 on the outcome of this examination (see General Assembly resolution 57/270 B, para. 46). The Secretary-General will prepare relevant recommendations for consideration by the functional commissions and report on the outcome to the Council, as envisaged above.

C. Review of the implementation

21. Provision for periodic reviews was included in the outcomes of most of the major United Nations conferences and summits held in the 1990s. Such reviews were held in various forms, including special sessions of the General Assembly. While these reviews did help in giving new impetus to follow-up, it was felt that they could have yielded better results if the periodicity, format and approaches to these exercises had been better adjusted to the particular requirements of each of the subjects being addressed, and the relationships and links among these exercises more fully taken into account.

22. To respond to this need, the General Assembly, in its resolution 57/270 B, stressed that the reviews and appraisals should provide occasion to reaffirm the goals and objectives agreed upon at the conferences and summits. They should identify obstacles and constraints encountered, actions and initiatives to overcome them and important measures for the further implementation of their programmes of action, as well as challenges and emerging issues.

23. On the question of periodicity and the format of the review, it was emphasized in the resolution that these should be decided on a case-by-case basis by the General Assembly, bearing in mind the relevant specific provisions, taking into account the needs, concerns and specific nature of the issue and the economic and political circumstances and developments, and also bearing in mind the need to continue efforts to use the existing structures, as well as the calendar of major United Nations events (see General Assembly resolution 57/270 B, para. 73).

24. The General Assembly also stressed in the resolution that there was scope for a major event in 2005, possibly a comprehensive review, which could be politically attractive and powerful, bearing in mind that the General Assembly had decided to review in 2005 the progress achieved in implementing all the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration, on the basis of a comprehensive report of the Secretary-General (see General Assembly resolution 57/270 B, para. 75).

25. In addition to the comprehensive review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration envisioned by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/144, and recalled in the above-mentioned provision of General Assembly resolution 57/270 B, the General Assembly is to convene the second high-level dialogue on financing for development in 2005.

26. Considering the great potential of the proposed "major event" for imparting renewed energy to the achievement of agreed goals and objectives, there is a need to ensure that it should yield optimal results. If skilfully planned, the proposed "major event" could go a long way towards raising awareness, mobilizing political will and public opinion, and engaging relevant stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector. The process of planning for this event, which is also addressed in the recent report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration (A/58/323), should thus start during the current session of the Assembly.

V. Recommendations

27. **The General Assembly may wish to invite all relevant bodies and organizations to implement the provisions of its resolution 57/270 B that are relevant to their mandates and provide information to the Assembly about the progress achieved in this regard.**

28. **The General Assembly may wish to initiate timely consultations for consideration of the indicative programme of work for the Second Committee, as set out in the annex to resolution 57/270 B, in order to ensure that a decision is adopted by December 2003.**

29. **At its fifty-eighth session, the General Assembly may wish to initiate an assessment of the functioning of the follow-up mechanisms established in chapter III of the Monterrey Consensus.**

30. **The General Assembly may wish to give guidance on the report to be prepared under this agenda item for its fifty-ninth session, taking into account other reports that deal with the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields, as well as the Secretary-General's annual reports on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration.**

Notes

[1] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1), chap I, resolution 2, annex.

[2] *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.